

MASTER SURGEONS OF AMERICA
RAMON MACÍAS

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A GREAT genius in the surgical world was Ramon Macías who was born on February 14, 1856, in the small and picturesque town of Villa de los Reyes de Salgado, Michoacan. In the same town and in the same house one of the most illustrious members of the Mexican clergy was born—Dr. Don Clemente Munguia, Archbishop of Michoacan.

Ramon Macías was the son of poor parents, Señor don Cayetano Macías and Señora doña Teodora Zepeda, who were obliged to change their residence frequently to secure the necessities of life. The boy Ramon obtained his primary education in the schools of Los Reyes and Lerma. He took a course in Latin in the Ecclesiastical school of Pátzcuaro and then entered the historical college of San Nicolas de Hidalgo in Morelia to begin his preparatory and professional studies.

When he was very young he resolved to devote his life to the study of medicine because he felt that that was his true vocation. He had to overcome great difficulties in order to continue his studies in the National School of Medicine. He entered the Military Hospital as a candidate and on the completion of his course was given the rank of Major as a military physician and surgeon. He served in the army of the Occident under General Manuel Gonzalez and was then commissioned to study yellow fever in the states of Tabasco and Yucatan. At this time he was a follower of the great surgeon, Dr. Francisco Montes de Oca, whose memory is still honored as a surgeon and as organizer of the Medical Military Corps.

As a result of his brilliant work in a competitive examination Macías was made an assistant professor of clinical surgery under Dr. Rafael Lavista, a position which he held until the death of his chief, whom he succeeded, then becoming professor of surgery. Dr. Macías was especially fitted for this position because of his surgical skill and his extraordinary gift of imparting to his students his knowledge of the difficult art of surgery and of teaching them how to interpret the clinical signs and symptoms of patients.

He showed remarkable genius in making diagnoses even in the most difficult cases: for instance, before catheterization of the ureters was known and before the X-ray was of use in such cases, he diagnosed a ureteral calculus impacted at the

mouth of the ureter to the astonishment of the physicians of his time. His diagnosis was confirmed when the patient was operated on in Europe.

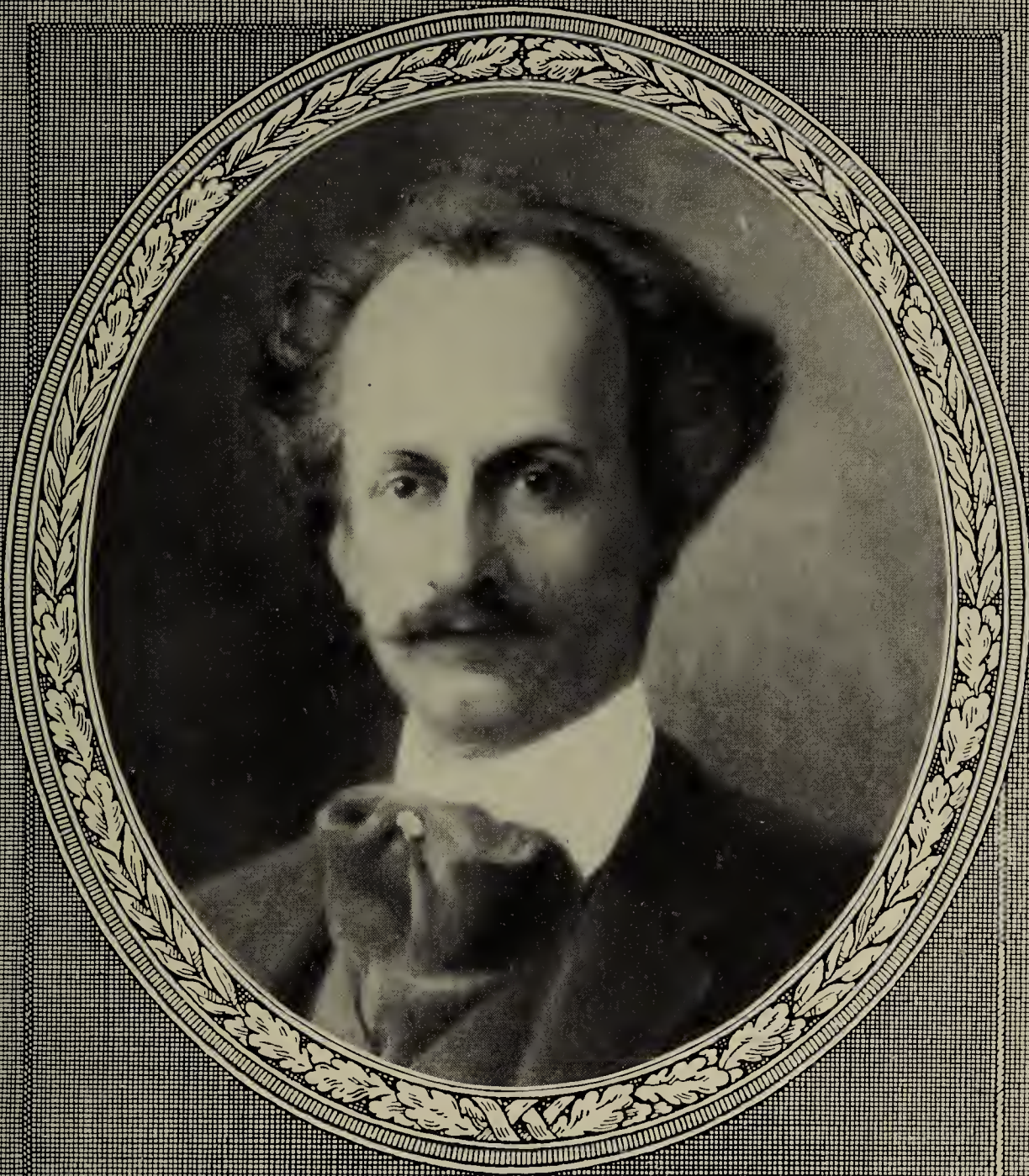
He invented various instruments for operations on the bladder and he was among the first to use tincture of iodine as a skin and internal disinfectant in some diseases of the circulatory and respiratory systems.

His method of performing prostatectomy deserves special mention. His technique was taught to Professor Albarran, of Paris, by one of Macías' pupils, Dr. Reynaldo Deffis. The name of Dr. Regino Gonzalez also should be credited with Dr. Macías in the working out of the technique for the prostate. Together they operated on an old prostatic with complete obstruction. They operated through a perineal incision and canalized the bladder. During the operation it occurred to them that it might be possible to enucleate the prostate, the cause of the obstruction. This they did and the patient was cured, and lived some years free of his disease. They repeated the operation on various other patients and improved their original technique. At this time Dr. Deffis had planned a trip abroad so they took advantage of this opportunity, and had Dr. Deffis explain the operation to some of the surgeons of Europe. The operation was received with enthusiasm by Albarran and Guyon and thence became used generally throughout the world. This operation alone should preserve the name of the illustrious surgeon, if there were no other reason for it.

Dr. Macías was a man of the world with a vast general knowledge, acquired on his many voyages to Europe, where he filled the diplomatic post of assistant at the Mexican Legation in Paris, and in the United States. He had an affable disposition, was an interesting conversationalist, was always ready to do good, and was one of the most outstanding figures in scientific and social circles. He also was alderman of the Capital and president of the Council of Health.

As director of the Morelos Hospital for many years he introduced many scientific improvements and materials into this old hospital, one of the wards of which still bears his name as a homage to his memory. While operating on a patient in this hospital he acquired an infection of the index finger of the left hand which in the course of time brought about an aneurism of the aorta. When he was driving home in his carriage one day the aneurism ruptured, causing immediate death. The doctor failed to leave the carriage when his home was reached and the driver discovered that the doctor was dead. This occurred on September 19, 1916.

Death thus closed prematurely the life of this master, this man of science, this great-hearted man who knew neither hate nor rancor. He was mourned by his students, his patients, and his many friends. This life of labor which had yielded so many and such excellent fruits was ended without pain or bitterness, when perhaps the mind was busy pondering over some new operation, some new method of relieving pain. Men like Dr. Macías are an honor to their name, to their country, and to humanity.



RAMÓN MACÍAS
1856-1916

